

**Minutes of the Regular Public Art Commission Meeting
Thursday, September 27, 2007
City Council Chambers, City Hall**

CONVENE: 7:10 p.m.

1. ROLL CALL: Chair Huston, Vice-Chair Lee, and Commissioners Arrants and Rosenberg. Commissioner Wolfe arrived at 7:30

STAFF PRESENT: Cathy Woodbury, Planning & Building Director; Douglas Vu, Planner III; Tony Ebster, Recording Secretary

2. MINUTES: Minutes for the Regular Meeting of August 23, 2007

Continued to the meeting of October 25, 2007

3. ORAL COMMUNICATION:

4. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. Cultural Arts Grant Program.

Doug Vu gave a powerpoint presentation, which described and outlined the objectives, guidelines and ideas regarding the Cultural Arts Grant Program.

Cathy Woodbury expressed appreciation for the large number of people in the audience. She mentioned that despite the formal setting, the love of art should be embraced. She talked about the next steps in the process for the grant program, which consisted of listening to input and ideas from the Community and the Commission, then drafting a program for presentation at the November Public Art Commission meeting and then taking a proposal to City Council. She suggested working through some components of the program.

Chair Huston replied by asking about the public presentation. She agreed that starting with the public presentation was a good place to start. She mentioned the rules of order and explained to the public that a certain protocol was to be followed.

Joseph Woodard expressed appreciation for the program. He spoke to the objective in the program that speaks to the funding for art spaces. In his experience he has learned that art space can be expensive and support is important. He mentioned the Presidio in San Francisco and how it is being used as open space and it is paying for itself through various means. He suggested that common space could be useful and could also be a revenue earner. It could be affordable for artists.

Patricia Edith expressed a misunderstanding that the Commission didn't want to handle the grant program. She wanted to ask what was going to be done first and how the grant money was going to be distributed. Those questions were answered by Mr. Vu's presentation. She suggested that whichever body handles the grant program should also handle the appointment of poet laureates. She was under the impression that every

two years a poet laureate would be appointed and pointed out that it had not been done. She wanted to suggest that the final decision regarding the grants be done by an outside entity or by lottery. She thinks the \$50,000 should be used for all disciplines of art and feels that there should be representatives from all areas of the arts. She also mentioned a strange feeling at the last meeting and proposed that grants of \$2,000 be awarded to an individual writer, performance artist, visual artist, musician and an interdisciplinary artist. She also mentioned that \$4,000 grants could be awarded to groups in visual arts such as theater, dance, literary arts, museum, gallery or music groups. Also, a grant could be awarded to art programs for kids, low income or elderly groups. She expressed excitement and suggested that it can be done and doesn't need to be complicated.

Clint Imboden wanted to make the point that the most important part of a grant program is giving resources to the individual artist. He also mentioned that organizations would not be there without the individual artist.

Chair Huston welcomed Commissioner Wolfe to the Commission.

Michelle Frederick thanked the City for recognizing that art is important and that it is economically viable for the community and for artists. She wanted to talk about the grant criteria and wanted to make sure that it inclusive, visual arts, all media, written and spoken word, performances and events, architecture, historic preservation and culinary arts. She felt strongly that grants should be available to individuals as well as groups and feels that there should be a portion set aside for individuals to apply for. In addition, she feels that the art product that is produced should contribute to the advancement or enhancement of Alameda and the art community. She also wanted to make sure that the grants that are awarded are given to the appropriate recipient, such as teaming up with art departments in schools to further the understanding of what art is, a partnership. Another element she felt would be important is a comprehensive marketing program that would catalog and calendarize all art activities, an active promotion that would market the art activities and cultural assets in Alameda. It could bring in revenues and give great exposure to local artists.

Elizabeth Calandario concurred with Ms. Frederick. She gave a personal history and wanted to make sure that philosophies regarding art be evaluated with as much respect as the art itself. She brought up the proposal of a steering committee for the applications for grants. Her concerns were with the potential structure of the committee. She wanted to make sure that all projects of merit get a fair hearing. She wanted to make sure that the steering committee doesn't overlap or duplicate the mission or responsibilities of the Commission and it should seek out lesser known artists or artists that are new to the community. She submitted her suggestions in writing and asked about the paid positions and how they were funded. Her concern was that the money to pay for the administrative positions was going to come out of the art fund and that it would consume a significant amount of that fund. Finally she brought up the recent graffiti problems seen on some of the public art in Alameda.

Jeff Cambra, a member of an ad hoc steering committee representing a portion of the art community introduced some of the audience members. He wanted to entertain more information on the process of the grant program and thanked everyone for all the work they have done. He expressed eagerness to assist and contribute to the process. He mentioned that there are a number of options that can be used to achieve the objectives and goals of the grant program. He wanted to request that a portion of the art

community speaking through the ad hoc committee be able to discuss and consider all components of the program in an open forum. This committee is committed to holding monthly meetings in tandem with the PAC so the arts community can participate in the final version of each component of the program without delaying its progress. He asked that a timeline be given so they can respond to steps taken. He wanted input from the Commission on what role they would play in evaluating the program components. He was interested in their preferences. In closing, he asked that the Grant Program reflect the needs and desires of the art community.

Pat Colburn mentioned the current amount that the Commission has and suggested that a portion of the fund be used to hire a grant writer. Her idea is that it takes money to make money and if all the money that is currently in the fund is given out, there will be no more. Therefore, a portion of the fund should be put towards soliciting more money to grow the art fund.

Mike Sheppard, President of the Frank Bette Center for the Arts observed that despite the urgency to get the program up and running, people are still learning how to work together. He mentioned some conversations he has had with different people nationally to get more information on how to structure the program. He pointed out some misunderstandings and miscommunications and mentioned that one of the objectives is to open up the program as much as possible, to get as many voices in as possible. In addition, he wanted to clarify that the brainstorming and ideas are not formal proposals. Mr. Sheppard questioned a couple of items in Mr. Vu's presentation. One was that grants must be matched dollar for dollar and that there was a cap. He was surprised by these new elements. He also asked about an overlap when it falls under the public art fund and if it is public art. He also expressed concern that grants go to individuals as well as organizations. He addressed the community and invited them to participate in the steering committee.

Carol Burnett, president of the Alameda Art Association, started with a history of the organization and their purpose of helping artists present in many venues regardless of their medium. She mentioned that they want to use the money for an arts center for classes and workshops. But her main concern was having the developers give a percentage to local artists. She felt that there should be an amendment to increase the amount that developers give as public art and to artists.

Chair Huston gave a last call for speaker slips to the public.

Ms. Woodbury responded to a couple points to clarify. The graffiti issue will be forwarded to the appropriate department. In response to the questions of who receives a grant, she clarified that the program is not even developed yet. There is nothing in place and it is not known who will get grants. The amounts that Mr. Vu mentioned were examples of what other cities are doing. She mentioned that this grant fund is supposed to be \$50,000 over a two-year budget cycle and clarified that there is a dollar for dollar match, which was discovered upon review of the City Council direction.

There were several responses and questions as to what exactly a dollar for dollar match is.

Ms. Woodbury responded by clarifying that it can be matched by providing funds, receiving another grant and getting sponsors.

Vice-Chair Lee asked for further explanation.

In response to Vice-Chair Lee, Ms. Woodbury said that it shows an investment on the part of the person requesting the funding.

Chair Huston wanted to put that issue on an agenda to discuss how to approach it.

Ms. Woodbury clarified that the grant program wasn't to result in an actual "piece," but rather to facilitate cultural arts in general and to help people to achieve their goals.

Debra Owen expressed appreciation for the work of the Commission and the City for reaching out to embrace the greater arts community and the creativity. She feels that \$50,000 is not a lot of money, but feels that there is a wealth of creativity in the community and people who are willing to work to connect with the community to make things happen. She prefers to see the \$50,000 as seed money, this is just the beginning. One point she made is that the diversity of creativity that is available is broad and she encourages whichever body determines where the money goes will categorize the distribution to seed the growth of creativity. Her second point is that she is not understanding where the Commission stands and how their mandate fits in with the Grant Program. She thinks it would be wonderful if the support goes towards the enrichment of as many lives as possible.

Chair Huston asked if there were any more speakers.

Kim Nichols spoke to several items that did not pertain to the Public Art Grant Program.

Chair Huston closed the public comment section of the meeting. She reiterated the protocol of the meeting.

There was a question from the floor regarding the two-year cycle.

Chair Huston replied that it is on a two-year cycle and thanked all of the people spoke. She asked if there were questions from the public.

Mr. Sheppard asked about the formal protocol.

Ms. Woodbury clarified that since the Commission is a public body, rules and guidelines must be adhered to.

Chair Huston started the conversation within the Commission and what they are discovering is while they are on the same page, there is a lot of misunderstanding. She mentioned that the Commission is new and they are still learning how to proceed as an appointed body. She talked about how they are trying to gain instruction from superiors and that nothing has been decided. She mentioned Mr. Vu's timeline and expressed appreciation for its direction. She wanted to address the question associated with the grants and feels that art that is publicly funded must benefit the public. It must offer a profound contribution. She outlined the qualifications for public art:

1. Intellectual merit
2. Brilliance in design, craftsmanship, vision or execution
3. Access

She talked about applications, access and how all products should be treated with equal consideration. The art must serve the public and she has no opposition to funding artists or organizations.

Commissioner Arrants responded by saying that he is new to serving on a Commission ,but has been an actor and director for 40 years so he has been on both sides of the podium. He gave a short history of what he has worked on regarding public art and programs. He talked about the enrichment of the generations and how important it is. He asked if stage production companies are obligated to contribute to public art. He hopes that together they can come up with something that is beneficial for the community.

Vice-Chair Lee spoke to some things brought up by the public. She said that \$12,500 was going to administration, \$6,250 per year. She pointed out the contingency that was interested in brick and mortar projects such as art centers; gallery space and physical plants of some sort as well as the many organizations that would like to receive grant money. She asked about organizations and if they have to already exist and be providing a service to receive money. She spoke to the selection process for individuals and should not be done in the first week. She replied to Ms. Colburn's suggestion about taking money to make money and said that a track record is required to be able to get grant money. She said that some groups exist because some federal money has been given already. She would like to see modest goals and objectives, which are achievable within the first two years.

Commissioner Wolfe expressed appreciation that so many people showed up to the meeting. He supports the idea of a grant program. He thinks the mission of the Commission is for public art and the review of art for public spaces. He also thinks that there must be a group to address the grant program.

Commissioner Rosenberg stated that she wants to make sure that an outside influence exist along side the grant program. She wants to make sure that everything is clear and understandable.

Chair Huston concurred and talked about the dollar for dollar and how it would be virtually impossible for individual arts grants and how prohibitive it would be. She thinks that there should be a way for the Council to support individuals by funding existing opportunities. There should be a way to foster individual grants.

Ms. Woodbury said that a program should be developed to recommend to City Council. She said that Council is counting on the PAC to advise them on grants programs. In addition she mentioned that there are in lieu fees as a way to match the dollar for dollar grants.

Chair Huston responded by saying that its useful and interesting to see how people might spend money, but she thinks there will never be a proposal that doesn't have a component that serves the greater public. She brought up an item that was mentioned at a prior meeting to find a specific model to accommodate the folksy nature of Alameda.

Mr. Sheppard pointed out that Peducha contributed much more on a per capita basis to public art.

Chair Huston said that success breeds success.

Ms. Woodbury provided some suggestions on how to develop the program. She said that the “who” should be refined and what kind of things the grants should fund.

Chair Huston brought up that the mission is the first thing. She wants it to be community based and referred back to the criteria she gave earlier.

Commissioner Rosenberg said that because of what was said, it is about the whole of the community.

Chair Huston said that she hears two sides. She stated three goals:

1. Support the arts community
2. Elevating the level of art within that community
3. Expanding art to the public, making it accessible to the public in general

Commissioner Rosenberg responded to the statement of elevating the level of art is the intellectualism of it and is afraid of marginalizing some. She feels that it is not necessary.

Chair Huston asked for a mission statement.

Vice-Chair Lee gave a statement for the grants “to include the richness of the community in an arts program, which would develop existing resources and make them available or accessible to the greater community,” so that you don’t have to be an artist to enjoy it.

Chair Huston responded by saying that she wouldn’t mind including examples of how some things should not be set in stone.

Commissioner Rosenberg talked about economic viability and how it could bring in revenue. A cultural arts center could be a great thing for the community and wants that put in the mission statement.

Vice-Chair Lee responded by saying that \$50,000 could easily be spent to raise money for a \$500,000 brick and mortar venue.

Commissioner Wolfe brought up what some one had said about the catalyst and the seed capital.

Chair Huston responded to Mr. Wolfe by saying that there should be no limit to how little a grant can be.

Commissioner Rosenberg suggested starting small but having larger goals and plans.

Commissioner Wolfe said that it should be about stimulating public art in the community. He wants to broaden the reach of the program. He thinks that grants should look at voids in the community to reach out and fill those voids.

Chair Huston responded to the mission statement and said that a good statement would be “To stimulate public art in the community”. She likes the idea of a catalyst. Another

statement from Chair Huston was “The goal of the Alameda Cultural Arts Grant Program is to serve as a catalyst to stimulate public art in the community.”

It was agreed upon that it was vague.

Commissioner Arrants pointed out the statement on the literature he was given by Mr. Vu. He read the points out loud and related those points to the conversation. He realized that the struggles are the mechanics of the program. He wants to know things such as what is going to happen with such a small amount of money.

Chair Huston reiterated the protocol. She clarified that what Commissioner Arrants read was the mission statement for the Public Art Commission and how their original initiative was to administer money on the percentage for arts but it is shifting and now they will be defining and administering the Public Art Cultural Grants Program. She feels that everyone is on the same page as to how the program will proceed; including grants to individuals and organizations and would not include bringing in people from outside Alameda. She added a part that is related to a long-term goal that involves an art center.

Commissioner Wolfe stated that just the calling for arts would stimulate a lot of interest.

Chair Huston brought up a ‘social practice artist’ and described what that is. Her example illustrated how some artists rearrange exhibits to show the contradictions between what is represented and what is not said. It’s about a reframing of an institution. An idea she had was to seek out practitioners do not participate and include them in the grant program.

Commissioner Rosenberg suggested creating some sort of call for artists.

Chair Huston said that dealing with the basics such as the individual and organizational grants is first but then it’s about digging out the rest of the community and finding ways to include them.

Commissioner Rosenberg replied that was a good idea.

Commissioner Wolfe stated he thinks that whatever happens, the “first launch” should be good. He wants to try to capture as many as possible in the first go around.

Chair Huston brought up the criteria and how there could be an easy misapprehension. She mentioned the tile project and how conflicted it is. It included a lot of people but didn’t show a bigger picture. She is concerned with issues of quality.

Ms. Woodbury said that they have made good progress. She said this is the preliminary step to creating a program.

Vice-Chair Lee mentioned that there is no website of an inventory of who is doing what and what they would like to do. She thinks it would be nice to start a website that has a catalog of who has done what as well as having a blog. She suggested a “wiki” style site so people could add to it.

Ms. Woodbury clarified the budget by saying that some of the money is being used for administrative purposes. She wants to take the PAC program to City Council in December for recommendation as to how the money is spent.

Chair Huston asked when the annual plan goes to Council.

Ms. Woodbury responded by saying that typically it would go during the first meeting of December but it may be likely to go the second meeting of December.

Chair Huston noticed the urgency of a website and a blog to accommodate community discussion.

Ms. Woodbury suggested scheduling a workshop or meeting that would allow interaction with each other and to brainstorm ideas in order to bring forth a formal discussion to regarding the grant program at a later time.

Chair Huston proposed scheduling of a special meeting. It was unanimously agreed upon. She suggested tabling the minutes and the discussion of item 4-B. She asked if they should name agenda items for the upcoming meeting and asked about the one thing still on the agenda, which is the review of the guidelines.

Mr. Vu suggested addressing the other agenda items first before the review of the policy guidelines.

Commissioner Wolfe brought up the percentage for public art and the ordinance.

Chair Huston reminded the Commission that the ordinance is still on the table and wants it to be agendized. She noted that she wants the discussion of things to be wide open such as the ordinance. She asked if there are any subcommittees that will be needed for anything.

5. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS:

6. ADJOURNMENT: Meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Vu, Secretary

Public Art Commission